

Press Release US Dept. of Education

Office for Civil Rights Announces Resolution of Complaints Alleging Shared Ancestry Discrimination by Five Campuses in University of California System

Agreement resolves nine complaints filed with OCR against five University of California campuses in Los Angeles (UCLA), Santa Barbara (UCSB), San Diego (UCSD), Davis (UCD) and Santa Cruz (UCSC)

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The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) today announced that the University of California has entered into a resolution agreement to ensure its compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) when responding to allegations of harassment or other discrimination based on national origin, including shared Jewish, Israeli, Muslim, Palestinian, and Arab ancestry.

The agreement resolves nine complaints filed with OCR against five University of California (UC) campuses in Los Angeles (UCLA), Santa Barbara (UCSB), San Diego (UCSD), Davis (UCD), and Santa Cruz (UCSC). The complaints alleged that these universities failed to respond promptly or effectively to harassment of their students based on their actual or perceived national origin (including shared Jewish, Israeli, Muslim, Palestinian, and Arab ancestry) and that some of these universities subjected these students to different treatment with respect to their access to campus or university programs.

OCR's investigations included interviewing students and university employees and reviewing university policies and procedures, information related to reports and complaints made to university campuses, and publicly available information such as videos of alleged harassing events on campus in 2023 and 2024. Additionally, OCR reviewed 2024 university taskforce reports and court filings about the alleged harassment at UCLA. Before OCR completed its investigations, the University of California expressed an interest in resolving them through an agreement under Section 302 of OCR's case processing manual, and OCR determined that resolving its compliance concerns to date through an agreement was appropriate.

These concerns include that university campuses appear to have failed to respond promptly or effectively to a possible hostile environment based on national origin/shared ancestry when: (1) the alleged harassing conduct or protests involved First Amendment-protected speech and the universities appear not to have evaluated if the conduct nevertheless created a hostile environment based on shared ancestry for affected students; or (2) some of the universities' responses to alleged shared ancestry harassment may have failed to remedy the effects of a potential or apparent hostile environment and prevent a recurrence of the alleged harassment.

With regard to UCLA and its law school, OCR's compliance concerns stemmed in part from the university's receipt of more than 150 reports about protests and rallies in October and November 2023, as well as complaints related to an encampment on campus in spring 2024. These and other reports included:

Reports of rally chants such as, "death to Israel," "[t]here is no peace until they're dead," "intifada now," and "there is only one solution." A separate video reviewed by OCR depicted a group that included students beating an effigy of Israel's Prime Minister and shouting "beat that f*cking Jew" on the campus.

Muslim, Palestinian, and/or pro-Palestinian students experienced unwanted filming, doxing, and being followed both on and near UCLA's campus by other students and members of the public.

Reports of checkpoints at the spring 2024 encampment that allegedly denied entry to Jewish students who refused to "denounce their Zionism."

UCLA, through its campus police, allegedly failed to protect Palestinian, Arab, and/or pro-Palestinian student protestors while they were violently attacked, injured, and intimidated by counter-protestors, including third parties.

Of particular concern were reports of violence against students of Jewish and Israeli ancestry by protesters at the encampment and of a violent assault by counter-protestors on pro-Palestinian protesters at the encampment on April 30, 2024, and the subsequent law enforcement response, which the UCLA Chancellor described as one in which students "feared for their safety." In addition, OCR has a concern that the encampment at UCLA in spring 2024 may have subjected students to different treatment based on their national origin/shared Jewish ancestry, when their access to parts of the campus or UCLA programs was limited. OCR identified a similar concern about possible disparate treatment with respect to Jewish students' access to a multicultural center at UC Santa Barbara.

Similarly, the evidence to date showed that UC Santa Barbara, UC Davis, UC San Diego, and UC Santa Cruz all had widely reported incidents of alleged harassment against students based on their national origin, including shared ancestry,

indicating that these universities also had notice of a potential hostile environment for their students of Jewish, Israeli, Palestinian, Muslim, and/or Arab ancestry. For example, UC Santa Barbara received notice of antisemitic vandalism at a dorm room and signs posted at a student center that targeted some named Jewish students and stated that Zionists were not welcome. UC San Diego and UC Davis also received reports and complaints about students witnessing or experiencing antisemitic comments or actions by students and professors at protests, online, or in campus departments. Chancellors at various UC campuses made statements to their communities acknowledging hate speech, antisemitic and anti-Muslim discrimination, and/or other harms that students on their respective campuses had experienced.

To resolve the Title VI compliance concerns that OCR identified to date, the University of California has committed to implement actions, including:

Reviewing complaints and reports of harassment and other discrimination based on shared ancestry in academic years (AY) 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 to determine if the alleged conduct created a hostile environment and if further action is needed to provide an equitable resolution of each reported incident.

Reporting to OCR the universities' responses to reports of harassment and other discrimination based on shared ancestry in the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years.

Obtaining OCR approval for any revisions to university policies and procedures to ensure that they address Title VI's prohibition on discrimination based on race, color, and national origin, including actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics.

Training university employees and public safety and campus police officers responsible for investigating reports and complaints of discrimination about the university's policies, procedures, and obligations under Title VI to respond to shared ancestry discrimination.

Administering a climate assessment for university students and employees to evaluate the extent to which they are subjected to or witness harassment and other discrimination based on race, color, and national origin, including actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, and know how to report such discrimination. And,

Using the results of the climate assessments and university reviews of reports of shared ancestry discrimination to identify responsive steps for OCR's review and approval.